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Durban grass *Dactyloctenium australe* Steud. (Poaceae), an addition to the Flora of Telangana State, India

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ABSTRACT

Dactyloctenium australe Steud. was collected from Telangana State and reported here as an addition to the Flora of Telangana. A detailed description and colour photographs of this wild fodder grass were provided to facilitate identification.

Key words: Fodder, Grass, New record, Poaceae, Wildlife

1. INTRODUCTION

The genus *Dactyloctenium* Willd. of Poaceae, subfamily *Chloridoideae*, tribe *Cynodonteae*, subtribe *Dactylocteniinae* (Soreng *et al.*, 2017) is native to Africa. It comprises 13 species worldwide, of which 4 species exists in India (Prasanna *et al.*, 2020; Kellogg's *et al.*, 2020). Further, only 3 taxa distributed in southern India (Nagaraju, 2020) and they are good fodder sources for wildlife and domestic cattle. The genus is characterized by axis of spikes terminating in sharp point, spikes digitate, rarely racemose, upper glume mucronate or awned and differs from *Eleusine* Gaertn. by its raceme axis terminating with sharp bare point (Nagaraju *et al.*, 2020). During the course of botanical explorations in Telangana State, a grass sample was collected from Shadnagar, Rangareddy District, Telangana. Literature survey (Bor, 1960) and consultation of herbaria revealed that, the grass is *Dactyloctenium australe* Steud. Previously this species recorded only from Maharashtra (Potdar *et al.* 2012) and not reported from any other state of India. Authors reported as a new record to the Flora of Telangana and Identified specimen (BSID008938) deposited at BSID, Hyderabad. *D. australe* commonly known as Sweet smother grass or Durban grass. This grass supports the local wildlife being a source of fodder and also acts as a great soil binder.

2. TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Dactyloctenium australe Steud., Syn. Pl. Glumac. 1(3): 212. 1854; Bor, Grasses Burma, Ceylon, India & Pakistan 489. 1960; Karthik. & al., Fl. Ind. Enum. Monocot. 204. 1989 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: A. Habit; B–D. Inflorescence; E. Node; F. Ligule; G & H. Abaxial and adaxial view -a portion of the spike; I. Spikelet; J. Lower glume; K. Upper glume; L. Lemma; M. Palea; N. Stamens with pistil.

Type:– South Africa. J.F. Drège P00439431!

Stoloniferous perennial; culms slender, 30–85 cm. high, erect or geniculately ascending; nodes glabrous, brown, rooting at lower nodes; internodes 10–15 cm long. Leaves mostly cauline; leaf sheaths 2–12 cm long, compressed, keeled, glabrous; ligule ciliate, 0.5–1.3 mm long; leaf blades linear-lanceolate, 5–35 × 0.5–1 cm, flat, base rounded-subcordate, bulbous based hairs along the margins, apex acuminate; abaxial midvein having bulbous based hairy. Inflorescence composed of 1–4 racemes. Spikelets 3–5 flowered, oblong-elliptic, back of the rachis keeled. Lower glume oblong, 1–2 × 0.5–0.8 mm, margins entire, apex chartaceous, light pinkish in color, keeled; keel margin serrulate. Upper glume ovate-obovate, 1.5–2.3 × 0.5–1 mm, margin entire, apex rounded to truncate, chartaceous, keeled; keel extended in to a stout awn, 2–2.8 mm long, antrorsely barbed, green in color. Lemmas broadly ovate, 2.5–3 × 2–3 mm, margin entire, apex acuminate, chartaceous, keeled; keel extended in to a stout awn, 1–1.2 mm long, keel scabrid. Palea lanceolate-ovate, 2–2.8 × 0.5–0.8 mm, margins entire, apex acute, keeled; keel scabrid. Stamens 3, filaments 0.3–0.6 mm long, anthers ca. 0.45 × 0.3 mm. Ovary ovate-oblong ca. 0.55 × 0.3 mm.

Flower & Fruiting: August–October

Distribution: Maharashtra, Telangana.

Specimen examined: India: Telangana, Rangareddy district, Shadnagar, (N 17.12477°, E 78.27546°, 607 msl), 20.07.2020, S. Nagaraju 008938 (BSID).

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Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval

The ethical guidelines for plants & plant materials are followed in the study for species collection & identification.

Data and materials availability

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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